

Suicide Prevention & Intervention Initiatives in Rhode Island

**Prepared by
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Team**

**June 2000
Revised July 2000**

Northeast Injury Prevention Network Suicide Data Book: Rhode Island Data Highlights

Gender

Similar to national figures, in 1996 among Rhode Islanders 10-75+, females attempted suicide more often than males (80.6/100,000 vs. 59.4/100,000 people) but males completed suicide at a rate five times greater than the rate for females (16.3/100,000 vs. 3.8/100,000)*.

Age

Unlike national trends that show the greatest rates of suicide among people over 65, suicide rates in Rhode Island during the period 1992-1996 are evenly distributed across all age groups, with rates peaking at ages 40-44 (14.5/100,000)*.

Note: Rates are not age-adjusted

Race

While the number of suicides among whites far exceeds those among minority groups, the suicide attempt rate for blacks is almost twice as high as for whites (124.4/100,000 vs. 65.3/100,000 respectively). The rate of suicide for all races combined during the period 1992-1996 were 9.6/100,000.

YRBS

According to 1997 YRBS data, 24% of high school students in Rhode Island seriously considered attempting suicide in the past 12 months compared to 20.5% nationwide, and 10% attempted suicide in the past 12 months compared to 7.7% nationwide.

Suicide and leading causes of injury deaths 1992-1996

- Suicide accounts for 22.3% of all injury deaths in the age group 10-24 years.
- Suicide accounts for 27.5% of all injury deaths in the age group 25-64 years.
- Suicide accounts for 14.0% of all injury deaths in the age group 65+ years.

Note: Rates are not age-adjusted

*Rates based on fewer than 20 deaths and are unstable.

The Samaritans Of Rhode Island

24-Hour Suicide Prevention Hotline

Samaritans volunteers provide confidential, anonymous telephone support to the lonely depressed, grieving or suicidal. Over 30,000 contacts are received annually by The Samaritans in Rhode Island. 78.2% of individuals placing calls to the hotline are members of a risk group for depression and suicide or are actively thinking about completing suicide.

Elderly Outreach Project

Since caregivers, such as doctors, nurses, senior center workers and families, are more likely to be in contact with suicidal older persons than mental health providers are, The Samaritans developed an outreach project to provide information to help. The Samaritans' highly successful workshop series for elders, Elderly Depression and Suicide and Grief, Loss and Depression: A Workshop for Seniors has been continued over the past two years with funding from The United Way of Southeastern New England.

Schools Program

In the mid-1980's, the State of Rhode Island general Assembly enacted a mandate to provide for a curriculum in suicide education and prevention in Rhode Island 's public schools specifically naming The Samaritans as the deliverers of this comprehensive program. The Samaritans developed a school program teaching suicide awareness and prevention to instructors including health educators, school nurse teachers, school psychologists and social workers guidance counselors and administrators in a full-day setting. Instructors are trained by The Samaritans to teach suicide prevention as part of the health curriculum. A detailed teacher's manual is produced annually and provided for all instructors who participate in a full-day training seminar. Support and training is provided to private schools as well with funding provided by private foundations.

Postvention and Grief Services

The Samaritans are available to support bereavement support and facilitation following the death by suicide or other sudden, traumatic death to local schools, workplaces and families.

Safe Place Survivors' Support Group

The Samaritans' support group, SAFE PLACE, provides a non-threatening environment where caring people who have experienced loss through suicide can talk, listen, cry and share their feelings of shock, anger, denial, guilt and sorrow. The group meets weekly on Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m.

Rhode Island Department of Education

- Reviews suicide prevention, intervention and postvention protocols in Rhode Island secondary schools.
- Provides funding and support to Child Opportunity Zones (COZ's) in Rhode Island and conducts Safe and Drug-Free Schools training
- Provides funding and support to The Samaritans of Rhode Island for Suicide Prevention Program including training of health educators, school psychologists, school nurse teachers, social workers, guidance counselors and administrators in a curriculum of suicide prevention.

Rhode Island Department of Health

The RI Department of Health Division of Family Health is our Maternal & Child Health (MCH) agency responsible for the MCH performance measure for suicide. Currently there are no specific suicide prevention programs funded by the Department. However, The Adolescent Health Unit within the Division of Family Health funds the following youth development initiatives that indirectly impact on suicide prevention:

- School Based Health Centers (SBHC's) screening item on depression
- Women's Health Screening item on depression
- Men 2 B program training on warning signs
- Media campaign to get adults to be supportive of kids

The Rhode Island Department of Health Division of Disease Prevention & Control funds two programs that indirectly impact on suicide prevention:

- Public Health Surveillance of domestic violence, including intimate partner violence and sexual assault
- The RI Teen Dating Violence Prevention Program implemented in middle schools by the RIEAP, Student Assistance Program

Rhode Island Department of Corrections

Lifeline is a peer support program in place at the state correctional institution. Volunteers who have been trained and support by The Samaritans facilitate the prison program and its inmate volunteers under the supervision of the Department of Corrections psychiatric staff.

Mental Health Association of Rhode Island

MHARI annually participates in National Depression Screening in October and prepares and sponsors workshops and seminars on depression and suicide. MHARI disseminates informational materials about depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and other mental health disorders, raising public understanding of mental health issues.

Rhode Island Council of Community Mental Health Centers

Emergency Intervention Services, Assessment and Treatment

Each of nine community mental health centers maintains a 24-hour emergency service contact line. Professional clinical assessment and treatment is available at all community mental health centers throughout the state of Rhode Island.

Public Awareness Campaign

A vigorous public awareness campaign “change Your Mind About Mental Illness” is being promoted statewide by the Council.

Local Colleges, Universities and Hospitals

Several significant research projects are underway at Rhode Island colleges and universities, including a depression study at Brown University, a study of differences between suicide attempts and persons with suicidal ideation but no suicidal behavior underway at Rhode Island College (Mannock).

Anthony Spirito, Ph.D will be presenting at this conference regarding his research and experience at Hasbro Children’s Hospital.